

Instructions for Setting up Your Customized Version of Google to Show the FGS Tampa Web Site Updates

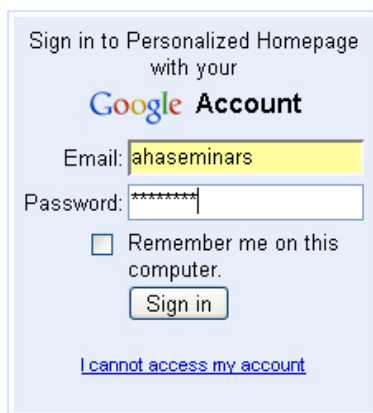
The most popular English-language search engine in the U.S., by far, is Google. In an article published at SearchEngineWatch.com (www.searchenginewatch.com) on 23 March 2007, Enid Burns reports the results of a comScore Networks' (www.comscore.com) survey of more than 2 million opt-in users. The users reported having conducted 6.9 billion searches of the Internet. People using Google performed 3.3 million searches, or 48.1% of the total searches of the Internet.

The chances are that you are a regular Google user, at least part of the time. However, are you using Google to your best advantage? Are you getting the most from Google? And have you customized Google for your optimum personal use? There are a number of great ways to set up this search engine and I want to talk about some of the most innovative and enjoyable tools.

Getting Started: Register for an Account!

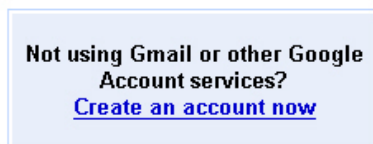
If you haven't registered with Google, it is a simple process. In the upper right corner of the main screen at Google (www.google.com) will be a link labeled 'Register.'

Registering is a simple process by which you establish a username – usually your Email address – and a password. If you've already registered, you won't see the 'Register' link; instead, you will see a link labeled 'Sign In.' In that case, simply click the Sign In link and, on the next screen, is the box you see below.



Enter your Email address in full unless you already have a Google Gmail account, in which case you can enter just the first portion of the address before the @ sign. Enter your password. If you plan to set this up on your exclusive home computer, you can check the "Remember me" box. Then click the **Sign in** button.

If you have problems accessing your account, click on the link and follow the directions on the next screen. Also, if you aren't using any of the Google services, all of which are free, you can click on the "Create an account now" link from here to set up your account.



The first screen you will see is the main Google screen. The search box is there, which is where you enter search terms. There are links over that box that allow you to search Web pages in general, search for images, search

for video files, get the latest news and/or search news archives (you can customize your news page too!), search for maps, and much more. Click on the "more >>" link. You also

have links to take you to the Advanced Search screen mentioned earlier; to Preferences to help customize your search engine experience; and to Language Tools that allow you to translate Web pages, text, and set the interface into your own native language if you are non-English or prefer another language. (There's even 'Elmer Fudd' and 'Pig Latin,' just for fun!)

On the main Google screen, once you have logged in, you will see a new link in the upper right that is labeled "iGoogle." Click that link and Google will present you with a marvelous version of its Web page on which you can customize your search engine experience *and* gather links to all your favorite blogs, podcasts, and other sites. You can also go back to the "Classic Home" page for Google by clicking the link in the upper right. There are two other great tools there:

- "Search History" will display a dated list of all the places you searched for. You can click on the links again and revisit the sites. Now there's no reason to bemoan the fact that "Last night I found a great site but didn't save it or write it down!"
- "My Account" lets you edit your personal information and the Google services you want to use.

Change the Appearance of Your iGoogle Page

You will see two additional links at the right. One is labeled "Select theme" and, when you click on that link, you can select one of a number of interesting themes for your iGoogle page *or* use the Classic Google page theme. Please note that some of these themes are time-sensitive and will change their appearance as the day and night pass by. After you click on a theme, click on the **Save** button and the new theme will appear on your screen.

The other link is labeled "Add stuff >>." Click on that link and you will be presented with a seemingly endless selection of fun things you can add to your iGoogle screen. These include a calendar, a dictionary, a clock, cartoons, photos of the day, different languages' a-word-a-day, and even a lava lamp! Try whatever you like by simply clicking the **Add it now** button beneath the item.

Bring The FGS Blog Content to You!

While all of these goodies are interesting and fun, you can customize your iGoogle page to *really* pull your personally important genealogy information sites to your fingertips.

Rather than have to remember to go to the FGS Web site to get the latest news, you can set up a connection between your iGoogle personalized page and to the FGS blog. That will show you the most recent news postings and announcements every time you go to Google, sign in with your ID and Password, and open your iGoogle page.

This will also work for any other blog or podcast that you are interested in keeping up with. No more will you have to go out to a blog site to see if someone has added a new entry. Never again will you have to check to see if a new episode or edition of your favorite podcast has been uploaded. Now you can customize your iGoogle page to have that notification to you in the form of links you just click on to go directly to them. *And* it's very easy to do!

At the top of the Add Stuff page and to the right of the **Search Homepage Content** button is a link labeled "Add by URL." (A URL is simply a Web address.) Click on that link and you'll be presented with another page on which the box below is shown.



Add by URL [Close](#)

Enter the URL for a gadget or feed that you want to add to your homepage.

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All you need to know to add a site to your iGoogle page is its URL. For example, if you wanted to add the FGS Web blog to your iGoogle page, you would simply type in the link <http://fgstampa.blogspot.com> in the box and click the **Add** button. Each time you add a new URL, an acknowledgement is shown under the URL entry box, such as is shown in the sample below.



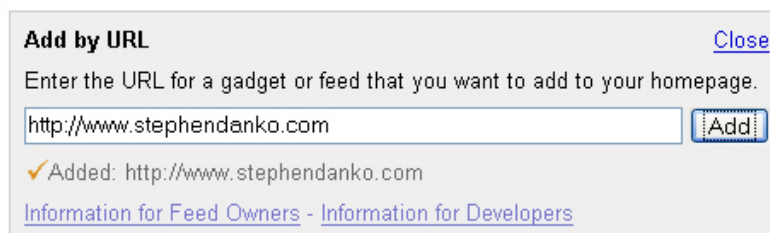
Add by URL [Close](#)

Enter the URL for a gadget or feed that you want to add to your homepage.

✓ Added: <http://fgstampa.blogspot.com/>

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If you want to add another blog, such as Steve Danko's blog, you would type the link <http://www.stephendanko.com> and click the **Add** button. If you want to add "The Genealogy Guys Podcast," you would type <http://genealogyguys.com> and click the **Add** button. In each case, for every addition, a new verification will be shown, such as the one for Steve Danko's blog below.



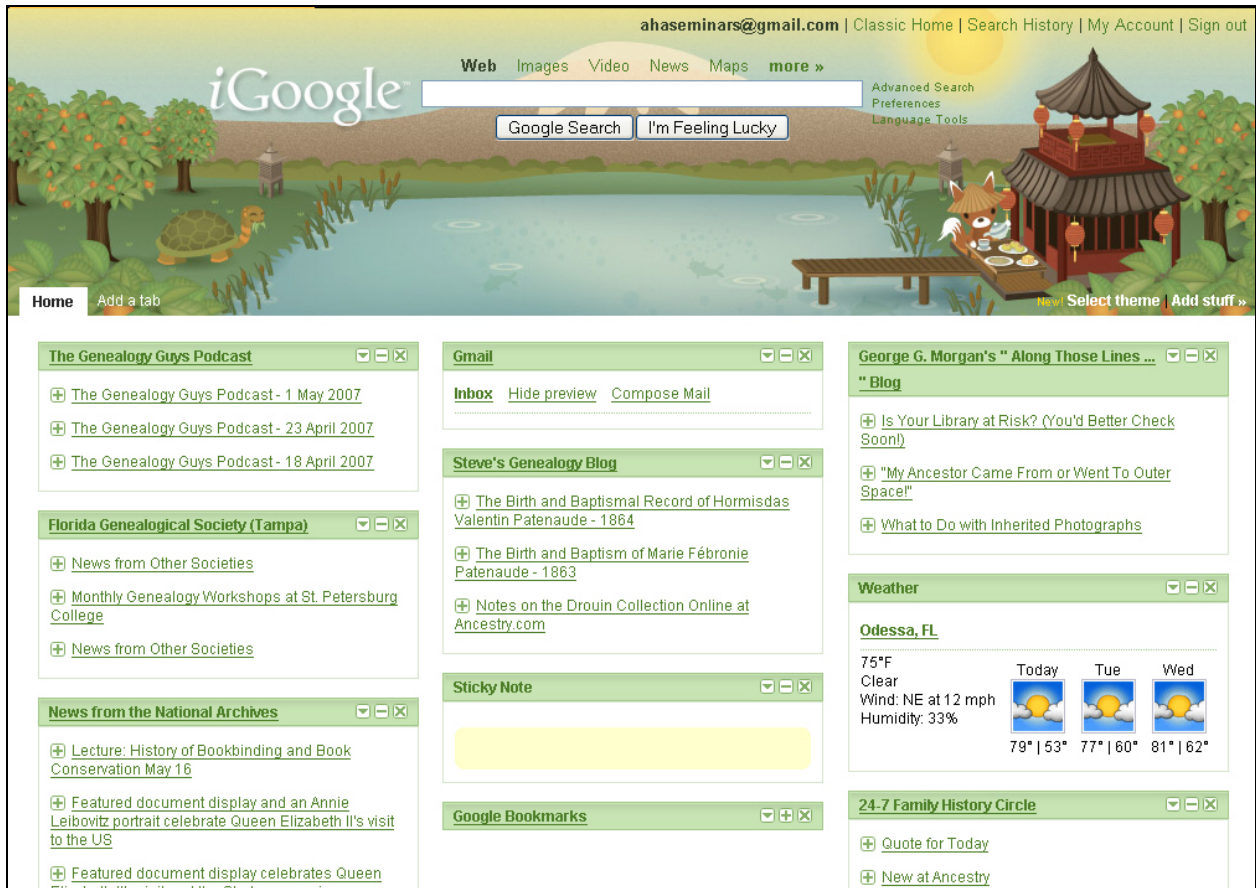
Add by URL [Close](#)

Enter the URL for a gadget or feed that you want to add to your homepage.

✓ Added: <http://www.stephendanko.com>

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When you are finished adding the URLs you want, you can close the Add by URL window by clicking on the “Close” link, and then click on the link in the upper left corner of the screen labeled “<< Back to homepage.” That will take you back to your iGoogle homepage. Shown below is a portion of George G. Morgan’s iGoogle page.



You’ll see that George chose the Teahouse theme for his iGoogle age. He added a weather tool, as well as links to “The Genealogy Guys Podcast,” the Florida Genealogical Society (Tampa) blog page, News from the National Archives, Steve Danko’s blog, George’s own “Along Those Lines ...” blog, and the Ancestry 24-7 Family History Circle blog. Let’s look at our FGS Tampa blog’s box.



In the sample at the right, I want you to note several important things. First, the title of the site at the top is a link you can click and that will open a new Web page and the top of the site will be displayed. Second, you can click on the text of any of the titles of the individual entries in the box.

This, too, will open a new Web page but you will be positioned at the start of that specific entry in the blog list/history. While that is fun, let's look at the other options for each of these feature boxes on the iGoogle Web page.

You can move your mouse over each of the boxes and a four-directional arrow will appear. Click and hold the left mouse button and you can move the box anywhere on the iGoogle page. In other words, you're determining the importance and position of each item!

Look in the upper right corner of the box and you'll see three little buttons.

- The downward-pointing arrowhead, when clicked, displays a small drop-down menu that allows you to do several things:
 1. **Change Settings** – Here you can change how many items appear in the list in the box. The default is 3, but you can set the number at from 1 to 9.
 2. **Send to a Friend** – This allows you to send an email with a link to the item to one or a number of friends and attach a message.
 3. **You might also like ...** – This option allows you to see other items that people who have linked to this site also linked to.
 4. **About this gadget ...** – This option tells you a bit more about this item, link, or gadget and allows you to add a comment about it.
- The next button that appears to have a minus or dash in it will, when clicked, minimize the list to simply a title. The '-' button is replaced with a '+' button that, when clicked, will expand the list again.
- The last of the three buttons has an 'X' in it. If you click that button, you will delete the box and its content from your iGoogle page.

There's one more button you should see. You will remember that earlier I said that you can click on the text of any of the titles of the individual entries in the box and a new Web page will open and you'll be positioned at the start of that specific entry in the blog list/history. Well, if you don't want to go to that trouble, you can click on the little '+' button to left of the entry for the title. This will open a drop down window right on your iGoogle screen and you can read the entire blog entry right there or, if it is a podcast or some other type of site, you can read any text that appears for that entry.

Other Cool Google Tools for You!

There are many excellent tools available to you to help manage your online life. From either the Classic Home or iGoogle main page, click on the link labeled "more >>" in the line of links about the search box. You will be presented with a short drop-down menu of options. Click on the one labeled "even more>>>" and you will find an impressive list of add-in tools that include:

- **Search** – There are more than 20 tools to help you conduct effective, specialized searches. Some that I like and use are:
 - **Blog Search** lets me locate blogs by topic;
 - **Desktop**, which allows me to search my entire computer for documents;
 - **Directory** allows me to search the Web by topic; and
 - **Notebook**, a new tool that lets you clip and save site addresses as you browse the Web, and then later have a record of the places you really liked.
- **Explore and innovate** is a place where programmers and non-programmers can find interesting programming ideas and tools. You can build your own custom search engine! Check out the Labs to see what new tools Google is developing.
- **Communicate, show & share** currently has 11 tools with such great tools as:
 - **Blogger** that allows you to start your own Weblog (blog) for free;
 - **Calendar** provides a full-feature online calendar program you can access from any Internet-connected computer;
 - **Docs & spreadsheets** is Google's entry into the word processing and spreadsheet arena with documents you create online and can access from any Internet-connected computer;
 - **Gmail** is Google's free e-mail service offering;
 - **Picassa** allows you to edit and manage your photos and then share them with other people; and
 - **Translate** is the most complete online language translation tool, and it allows you to translate typed or cut-and-pasted text *and* full Web pages.
- **Go mobile** provides several tools for use with your cellular phone or SmartPhone service.
- **Make your computer work better** contains a packaged collection of software you can download to help your computer and yourself operate better. There also is their Web Accelerator which claims to speed up your Web searching.

Going back to the Classic Home or iGoogle page, click on Advanced Search. This facility can help you focus your searches for optimum results. However, don't let the Advanced Search screen intimidate you. Simply click on the link at the upper right corner labeled "About Google" and you'll find a nice Help collection. You can also click on "Advanced Search Tips" and here you will find simple explanations of each field and instructions to help you use them effectively. One of my favorite features for genealogy searching is the Numrange search. It is unique to Google. With it, you can specify a range of numbers or currency in your search query and limit your search. The format is simple: it is the starting number, followed immediately with two dots (no spaces), and followed immediately with the ending number in the range. Let's say I was searching for genealogy Web pages for the Wilson surname in Virginia on which there were dates listed between 1850 and 1900. I would enter the following search.

genealogy wilson virginia 1850..1900

This would narrow my search to those specific Web pages and make an impossible task more manageable. This is just one special feature of Google.

Isn't it nice to be able to pull so many fun *and* essential things together in one place? No wonder Google continues to enjoy such popularity. It is not only the largest of the search engines, but its innovative tools and add-ins offer you a lot of flexibility *and* fun!